

Dear Father,

This is my last letter to you. I have been struck by a piece of shell. My right shoulder is horribly mangled, and I know my death is inevitable. With death so near I feel such regret that I will leave my life far from home and my friends of early youth. Yet I have friends here who are kind to me. My friend Fairfax will write you at my request. He will give you all the particulars of my death. My grave will be marked with a number so that you can find me if you desire to visit me. Give my love to all my friends. Know that I will always treasure those moments when you awakened me at early morn to walk the fields with our dogs or to fish the streams that moved through our land. With such anguish I recall the light fog covering the ground. Things seemed so gentle and beautiful then. When you hunt and fish again on such mornings, please think of me. I am amazed when I look down at my body and see how weak I have become. My strength is failing me, but my love for you is strong. May we meet in heaven with Mother.

Your dying son,
James Montgomery

*With death so close,
a desire to retreat into
memory and finally
express what?*

SAMPLE LETTERS

*Just before
which battle?*

June 26, 1863, moving into Pennsylvania
Dear Elizabeth,

How proud I am to be marching North with our great Marse Lee, the finest man I have ever seen. Soon I sense a major victory on Northern soil. I cannot face possible death again, my dear Elizabeth, without expressing how my heart swells with hot emotion deep inside my breast whenever I retreat into mystic memory so that I may caress your glowing face with my war-weary eyes. How I remember the dance at the Haverfords! We left all the music to walk through yellow moonlight. Then we kissed

Harper's Ferry, Virginia
October 2, 1862
Dear Mother,

I still live. In our regiment it ~~thing~~ like 45 killed, wounded, and ~~men~~, and we were very fortunate indeed. Had we been exposed like both the 69th or 63rd, there would scarcely be a man left to tell the tale. Dead men strewn over the battlefields by the hundreds while immense numbers were moving or being removed to the hospitals—both Union and Secesh.

*Keeping his mother informed,
not realizing how he is
frightening her with his
matter-of-fact expression of
death's omnipresence ...*